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Ministry of Forests and Range

B.C. FIRE CREWS DEPLOYING TO ONTARIO

VICTORIA – British Columbia is sending 141 forest fire fighters and specialists to Ontario to help that province respond to two large fires in the Thunder Bay area that are forcing evacuations and threatening buildings, said Forests and Range Minister Rich Coleman today.

"We took a careful look at our needs in British Columbia before deciding we could spare our crews," said Coleman. "So far this spring, we've had over 100 wildfires, which is down slightly from the average. We are confident that our crews will provide excellent support to their Ontario counterparts."

The fire danger rating in B.C. is currently low to moderate, with a seasonal warming and drying trend. Sufficient resources will remain in B.C. should fire activity increase or be needed to assist with emergency flood response. Deployed crews may be recalled at any time should conditions worsen.

Firefighters and specialists from across B.C. will be flying to Ontario today for up to 19 days. Staff include 10 three-person initial attack crews who respond to first fire calls, five 20-person unit crews who are dispatched to larger fires where significant resources may be needed, one incident management team who manages the resources, and two staff to represent the B.C. Protection Program.

Two large fires in Ontario have already burned 15,000 hectares.

Ontario requested assistance through the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre (CIFFC), which has co-ordinated forest fire fighting resources nation-wide since 1982. Costs of the deployment are being paid by Ontario.

The public reports nearly half of all wildfires in B.C. Please continue to report smoke and flames by calling toll free 1-800-663-5555 or *5555 on most cellular networks.

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Note to media: Ontario's Ministry of Natural Resources Website http://affm.mnr.gov.on.ca/

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